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NOTES FOR REMARKS

by

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to

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

ON THE OCCASION OF THE GRANTING OF AN HONOURARY DEGREE

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Appendix

HEAD

no. 33

Mr. Chancellor, President Lawless, Director MacDonald, Members of the Faculty, Guests, Fellow members of this graduating class of 1990.

I thank you sincerely for this honour, and for giving me the opportunity to associate myself formally with this very special institution. From Malacca in Malaysia, where the good priest's remains rested briefly following his death in 1552, to Antigonish from which so many well prepared and motivated graduates have gone forth each year since 1853, the reputation of St. F.X. is well established and the work of the Coady International Institute is revered. I'm proud now to be one of you. And I'm particularly proud on this day that pays special tribute to Father Dove whose work at Silveira House I have admired for many years, and especially so since I met him there in 1980. Your presence here today, Father, gives us all an opportunity to express the respect we have for you.

It's an exciting world that this graduating class is about to enter. Not necessarily the same kind of excitement as is associated with Nova Scotia politics, but enough to keep you on your toes nevertheless. And though many events may appear to be far removed from this province, it would be a mistake to be indifferent to them. In 1990, distance is an illusory concept. Today Antigonish and Harare are linked together by much more than sentimentality, as is the Persian Gulf

and the Bay of Fundy, or any other two places on this planet.

In the result, in the decade of the '90s, the word which has been part of your working vocabularies every day since your arrival here several years ago - cooperation - must become one of the 5 key concepts of human understanding and human behaviour. The four others - dignity, equity, compassion, and wholesomeness - are either goals or values. Cooperation is the active voice, the means by which the others will be achieved or preserved. I wish I could say to you simply that cooperation is the key to a better life. It is, of course, but at this critical juncture in the history of humankind it is much more. It is the essential mechanism for human survival.

With a momentum that is terrifying, yet which all too seldom attracts adequate attention from governments, journalists or the public, the human race has set itself upon a course of self-destruction. Those are dour words to express even in this dour part of Canada. They bear little resemblance to the message so often delivered at university convocations, when speakers urge the graduating class to catch the baton from its elders and carry on. I would be irresponsible were I to suggest that you do that. Mine, after all, is the first generation in the lengthy human odyssey to be turning over to its successor a world in worse shape than the one it inherited. One much more densely populated, more heavily armed, more poisonously

polluted; one with disparities in living standards greater than any previously encountered, one with social tensions so explosive as to be nearly uncontrollable. Your task must be to resolve our errors.

The global system may be able to survive this testamentary insult from my generation to yours, but it shall surely not sustain a further such. On you, therefore, rests the responsibility of restoring the concept of inter-generational equity. Happily, no course of study anywhere could better have prepared you for this task than your period here at St. Francis Xavier.

Thanks to the wisdom, experience and compassion of the St. F.X. and Coady teaching staff, you are aware at this moment of your graduation of so much more than was my generation when it left university. You know that we all live in an inter-connected, inter-dependent world; that greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere anywhere are likely to raise temperatures and affect the climate everywhere. You know, too, that the carrying capacity of this planet is not infinite, that exponential growth cannot continue indefinitely, that sustainable development must now be a priority for all nations. And because you have passed through the Coady International Institute, you understand that human dignity is not just a polite phrase. Human dignity is the God-given right of every individual, but a right that in global terms is often denied to the

majority even as it is often abused by the minority.

Pendant votre séjour ici, vous avez appris une autre chose: que tout le monde n'est pas identique; n'a pas la même couleur, ni la même foi. Pas tous parlent la même langue, au Canada ou en dehors. Vous avez compris que cette diversité représente une grande richesse, qui ajoute à nos vies des éléments culturels de sagesse et de profonde compréhension. Le monde est alors plus intéressant, plus stimulant, mais en même temps plus compliqué.

In some respects, Mr. Chancellor, those complications have tempted humankind over the centuries to take the easy path while all the time giving it inflated, lofty definitions to cover up the sham. We heap scorn instead of seek to understand, destroy rather than create, engage in war not resolve conflict.

The 20th century has earned the dubious record of being the bloodiest in recorded history. The ancient teachings of the 5th century B.C. Chinese, Sun Tzu - to use the minimum of force, and as rarely as possible - have been transformed into nuclear arsenals on 24 hour alert aimed at centres of population. This practice continues notwithstanding the momentous agreements signed in Paris last week. This century gave birth to the concepts of 'unconditional surrender' and 'total war', (both of which are now confusing

the issues in the Middle East), to 'mutual assured destruction', to conflicts which routinely kill many more civilians than military personnel, to the military-industrial complex, and to weapons transfers which have become the single most valuable category of manufactured goods in international commerce.

We have done this in large measure because it has been easier than solving the issues which underlie disputes, more attractive to coin jingoistic slogans than to show understanding for the interests of one's adversaries, more tempting to engage in polemics than deal with the discouraging dilemmas of disease and pollution and poverty.

By choosing the easy route again and again, the human species has placed itself in a descending spiral of agony. Those of us in the industrialized countries are so blinded by our arrogance that we seem unable to comprehend that our fate, inexorably, rests with the four billion persons residing in the developing countries of the South. Our economic health, increasingly, is dependent upon theirs; the state of our environment reflects the degradation of theirs; the tranquillity of our societies is affected by the tens of millions of refugees now on the move; the harmony of the international community is challenged by the political turbulence so widespread in the South.

None of these circumstances are beyond our ability to reverse. None require more than a redefinition of our

values, a reordering of our priorities, a redirection of our resources. In Paris last week, Mr. Chancellor, President Gorbachev said as much in his address to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. "Concern over the survival of the human race is no longer centred almost exclusively on the removal of the threat of nuclear war, as it was only a short time ago", he said. "It is increasingly focused on peaceful global problems, among them those of environment, energy, food and water supply, social ills, crime, mass poverty, foreign debt." Mr. Gorbachev could have added some reference to the momentum with which these destabilizing issues are accumulating.

The world's population will grow by some 20,000 in the course of this afternoon's convocation ceremony - equivalent to the population of Glace Bay; the world's stock of arable land decreases by 1 hectare every 14 seconds; the indebtedness of the developing countries mounts by US\$11 million per hour.

None of these issues will be resolved by weapons or force. They can be resolved, however, by the cooperative attitudes and techniques that have been pioneered by the Coady International Institute. And they can be assisted by the selfless and effective activities of the International Development Research Centre, the pioneer organization to assist developing country scientists to identify and resolve the development problems they regard

as most important. It does so with funds made available by Parliament, by the efforts of an international scientific staff, and through the governance of a distinguished Board from 11 different countries.

Remarkably, this university is home to 3 individuals who have served that Board - David Lawless, John Stewart, and currently, Alex Macdonald. Their contributions of energy and wisdom have ensured that IDRC retain its enviable record as "the premier institution of its kind in the world."

Human progress has been the product of our species' curiosity and our determination to understand the forces that contribute to biologic life and geologic circumstance. If our understanding to date has only been tenuous, that should only encourage us the more - in cooperation with other humans everywhere - to pursue our search and to perfect our relationships.

I can think of no more effective explanation of this challenge, or no better way of concluding these remarks, Mr. Chancellor, than to repeat to you something said by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau at the Mansion House in London in 1975 when addressing similar issues. He said: "We know in our hearts what has to be done even if we have not yet found in our minds the way it can be done."

You know in your hearts what must be done. I urge you not to be confused by competing signals from other sources. The future of this planet depends on your ability to make the correct choices, but even more on your willingness to make the decent choices.

I count on you not to underestimate your potential for constructive accomplishment.

Thank you, and all good wishes to each of you.